Group Undertakes Massive Job of Sifting Evidence

Young Lawyers, Students Probe JFK Assassination

By EDITH K. ROOSEVELT
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WASHINGTON — A private group is systematically exploring Lee Harvey Oswald's Communist connections and the entire national and international ramifications involving the murder of President John F. Kennedy.

Edith K. Roosevelt

This organization, which has assembled the most comprehensive file on the John F. Kennedy assassination outside of government, is entitled the Committee to Investigate Assassinations or CIA (not to be confused with the Central Intelligence Agency).

The private CIA, which operates out of a six room office at 927 15th St. NW, is dependent on contributions for funding its investigation work. Its investigators, mostly young lawyers and students, represent a loose confederation of people who have written or worked on the various conspiracy theories. Most work part time and their probe is beset with formidable difficulties.

According to Bernard J. Fensterwald, executive director of CIA who was formerly a Senate staffer, all 26 volumes of the published Warren Commission report deal with only five per cent of the material collected by the commission. In addition, there is a total of 10 per cent of the material gathered by the Warren Commission that is classified until the year 2039.

Much Left Out

"A great deal of selection was done and a great deal of material was left out of the published volumes of the Warren Commission report," said Fensterwald.

Quite aside from the possibility of any ideological bias on the part of members of the Warren Commission or of those who worked on the report, the sheer volume of material involved presents an enormous obstacle to any thorough investigation. There are 25,000 unclassified FBI reports dealing with the assassination in the national archives, according to Fensterwald. Thus, it would take a researcher five years of his life to go through them if he studied 100 a week or 20 a day, five days a week.

But even what is in the public domain is grist for the mill of those believing in conspiracy theories. No less a person than Sen. Richard Russell, who was a member of the Warren Commission, recently expressed his dissatisfaction with the results of the commission's findings. In a radio broadcast for Cox Broadcasting Corp. over WSB-TV, an Atlanta, Ga., television station, on Feb. 13, 1970, Russell said:

"I have never been completely satisfied with the report."

Oswald's Wife

The Georgia Democrat observed, "In the first place, Marina Oswald was never examined as she should have been. I gave her about 40 minutes of cross examination in Dallas, right at the end of the hearings, which was really the first she had ever had."

Sen. Russell went on to reveal that the commission had not seen fit to make certain documents available to the public "because there were some international complications." Significantly, Russell went on to say:

"I have never believed that Oswald planned that altogether by himself. There were too many things, the fact when he was at Minsk, and that was the principal center for educating Cuban students. There were 600 or 700 there.

"He was very close to some of them and the trip that h made to Mexico City and number discrepancies in th evidence as to, conflicts in th evidence as to his means o transportation, the luggage h had, and whether or not anyon was with him, caused me t have doubts that he planned all by himself."

Discrepancies

Fensterwald's CIA, which in the process of computerizin all the available information o the assassination of Presiden Kennedy, has collected in triguing discrepancies in th Warren Commission report.

For instance, repeatedly th ROOSEVELT Page 14

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ROOSEVELT

(Continued from Page One)

Warren Commission states "at there was no intelligence training school in Minsk during the period of Oswald's stay in that city between January of 1960 and June 1962. However, according to a memorandum from the Central Intelligence Agency (Warren Commission exhibit No. 2733), a Soviet defector had reported that an intelligence training school was in existence during 1947. The memorandum added that the continued existence of this installation has not been subsequently mentioned, confirmed or corroborated by Central Intelligence Agency sources.

Thus, as far as our government's top foreign intelligence gathering agency is concerned, there is no positive evidence that the intelligence school was either abandoned or relocated. Perhaps, the school merely went underground and Central Intelligence Agency sources were unable to confirm its existence.

Speculation Boosted

Whatever the explanation, the private CIA's sleuths do not believe that the Warren Commission's statements, simply denying the existence of the intelligence training school during the time Oswald was in Minsk, were justified. The commission's attitude only has served to increase speculation that Oswald might have had some connection with the intelligence school, particularly since the commission admits that this is the least-known period of his life.

There are other angles that beg questions in the Warren Commission report. Oswald was given the opportunity to enjoy one of the most prized apartments in Minsk during his stay. He also was given an extra income amounting to 700 rubles or $70 a month that supposedly came from the Russian Red Cross. However, in notes made during his return trip, Oswald stated that the subsidy given him came from the KGB and was in compensation for having "denounced" the U.S.A.

Subscribers to the Communist conspiracy theory speculate that the subsidy given Oswald could in fact have been a gift tied into his recruitment as a Soviet agent. There is also the fact that Oswald's Russian wife, whom he met and married in Minsk, had an uncle who was a KGB agent.

Diary Postdated

Another fact which arouses suspicion is the disclosure by the Warren Commission report that Oswald postdated the entries in his diary of experiences during his stay in Moscow. He did not even start his diary until he was in Minsk. Some people wonder could this mean that Oswald was ordered to prepare the diary as a cover? CIA researchers note that there are statements in his diary that are very critical of the Soviet system, the Soviet bureaucracy and Communism generally. Was the diary meant to be found and read by U.S. government investigators to throw them off the scent?

Still another intriguing bit of information which may fit into a pattern. According to Warren Commission Exhibit No. 1040, Dr. Herminio Portell-Vila of 4740 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, advised that on May 13, 1964, he had received a coded message from an unknown source within Cuba pertaining to Oswald's relations with two Cuban ambassadors while he was in Moscow. According to the memorandum given Portell-Vila, the files concerning these allged contacts by Oswald were turned over to Fidel Castro and his brother just two days after the assassination of President Kennedy.

Dead End Reached

The Committee to Investigate Assassinations would like more information on this but, mysteriously, efforts to obtain corroborating documentary evidence have reached a dead end. On June 4, 1964, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote the Warren Commission that the Central Intelligence Agency had concluded that the reference to "Osvaldo" in the memo furnished the agency by Portell-Vila referred to Oswaldo Dorticos, president of Cuba rather than to Lee Harvey Oswald. Therefore, Hoover informed the commission, the government considered "the message contained no information of significance and it was destroyed."

Researchers at the private CIA would tend not so easily to dismiss the coded message received by Portell-Vila as having no significance.

Finally, there is Oswald's trip to Mexico which to this day remains a major inponderable. Oswald carried with him to Mexico City the proof of his trip to Soviet Russia and of his left-wing activities including "street aviation" activities and membership in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The inference to be drawn was that he wanted to show credentials testifying to pro-Communist leanings. We are informed by the Warren Commission report that Oswald visited both the Russian and the Cuban embassy while he was in Mexico City and sought unsuccessfully to go to Cuba.

Classified Material

But the Warren Commission only discloses information concerning the first day of Oswald's five-day sojourn in Mexico between Sept. 27 and October 2, 1963. To know more, one would have to examine about 30 classified documents in the National Archives which pertain in some way to Oswald's trip to Mexico. Meanwhile, the CIA is trying to run down the backgrounds of the persons who were on the same bus as Oswald on his trip to Mexico. They are also trying to contact some Cubans who stayed at the hotel in Mexico City where Oswald was registered.

Will the Committee to Investigate Assassinations ever solve the mystery of President Kennedy's violent and untimely end? Or, for that matter, find what forces were behind the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy, which also are within its scope of interest?

Fensterwald is optimistic because "all the time new pieces of information turn up." He feels the work of his Committee is important "because there may be many more political assassinations if the earlier ones are not solved." He hopes that there will be a new official investigation of the assassination of John F. Kennedy either in a courtroom or by another commission or a Congressional committee.